



KHRUSHCHEV AT UKRAINIAN FRONT (1943)



LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION

WITH SOVIET TROOPS  
Fighting tanks with spears.

## Khrushchev: The Illusions of War

NO nation has ever suffered more appalling losses than Russia did in World War II, when 22 million of its citizens died. Determined to keep the searing memory of that struggle alive, the Soviet hierarchy has seen to it that an endless stream of histories and first-person accounts keeps flowing from state publishing houses. But as former Premier Nikita Khrushchev makes clear in the second installment of his reminiscences in *LIFE* this week, some of the most fascinating material about the Soviet conduct of the war has been scrubbed out of official chronicles.

**The Invisible Finns.** The Soviet ex-Premier's account begins with the event that set the stage for Russia's entry into the war—the nonaggression treaty between Stalin and Hitler in 1939. Khrushchev learned of the pact when he was summoned to Stalin's dacha after a day of hunting with other members of the Soviet hierarchy. "While the trophies of our hunt were being prepared for the table," recalls Khrushchev, "Stalin told us that [Hitler's Foreign Minister Joachim von] Ribbentrop had brought with him a draft of a friendship and nonaggression treaty and that we had signed it. Stalin seemed very pleased with himself. 'It's all a game to see who can fool whom,' he said. '[Hitler] thinks he's outsmarted me, but actually it's I who have tricked him.'" Stalin hoped, says Khrushchev, "that the English and French might exhaust Germany and foil Hitler's plan to crush the West first, then turn East."

Although the pact is generally regarded as one of the most cynical agreements in history, Stalin's decision met the approval of a majority of party members as "tactically wise," says Khrushchev. However, "we couldn't even discuss the treaty at party meetings. It was very hard for us—as Communists, as antifascists—to accept the idea of joining forces with Germany."

In an effort to build a buffer for Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, Stalin at that time demanded that Finland move its southern border to the north, beyond artillery range of

the city. The Finns refused, and Stalin decided to use force. "The Finns turned out to be good warriors," says Khrushchev. "We soon realized that we had bitten off more than we could chew. The Finns would climb up into the fir trees and shoot our men at pointblank range. Covered by branches, with white cloaks over their uniforms, the Finns were invisible."

At one point, Stalin called in Soviet Defense Commissar Kliment Voroshilov for a dressing down. Voroshilov angrily retorted: "You have yourself to blame for all this! You're the one that had our best generals killed!" With that, Khrushchev recalls, the Defense Commissar "picked up a platter with a boiled suckling pig on it and smashed it on the table." The 1939-40 "Winter War" cost about 1,000,000 Soviet lives, says Khrushchev, and ended in a "moral defeat" for Stalin, though the Finns agreed to pull back about seven miles.

**Pikes and Swords.** Soon there came a far more serious disaster—the Nazi invasion of June 22, 1941. At first, Soviet commanders were ordered not to return the German artillery fire. Says Khrushchev: "Stalin was so afraid of war that he convinced himself that Hitler would keep his word and wouldn't attack us."

Khrushchev became the Politburo's military representative in the Ukraine, then the main theater of the German attack. At one point, he desperately telephoned Moscow to ask for weapons. Georgy Malenkov, then a member of the State Defense Committee, told him to use "pikes, swords, homemade weapons—anything you can make in your own factories." Replied Khrushchev: "You mean we should fight tanks with spears?" Malenkov answered that "you'll have to do the best you can. Light up bottles of gasoline or kerosene and throw them at the tanks."

In those dark days, says Khrushchev, when the Germans marched to within sight of the Kremlin before their attack was blunted, Stalin was "paralyzed by his fear of Hitler, like a rabbit in front of a boa constrictor." When So-

viet generals were captured, Stalin branded them traitors and banished their families to Siberia. He refused to sign any official documents "for fear that history would record him as a defeated leader," and he grew suspicious of everyone.

Khrushchev fell under suspicion when a project in which he was involved—the offensive at Kharkov in 1942—failed disastrously. Some 200,000 Soviet troops walked into a German trap and were killed or captured. Says Khrushchev: "A few days after the disaster I received a call from Moscow. I was ready for anything, including arrest." Stalin reminded him that a gendarmier officer had been hanged by the Czar as a result of several serious Russian defeats during World War I. Replied Khrushchev: "Comrade Stalin, I remember this event well. The Czar did the only right thing. [Colonel] Myasnikov\* was a traitor." Khrushchev was saved, he believes, because he had advised Stalin against overextending Soviet forces at Kharkov, and his warning had been overheard by several men in the dictator's hierarchy.

**Burning the Dead.** The war, and Khrushchev's fortunes, took a turn for the better with the Soviet victory at Stalingrad and then in the massive tank battle at Kursk. After Stalingrad, where German Field Marshal Friedrich von Paulus' Sixth Army was destroyed, the Soviets were unable to bury the German dead in the frozen earth. Says Khrushchev: "We gathered thousands of corpses and stacked them in layers

\* Actually, the colonel's name was S.N. Myasoedov. He was accused of passing military information to the Germans and executed in a sensational spy case in 1915.

alternating with layers of railway ties. Then we set these huge piles on fire. Napoleon or someone once said that burning enemy corpses smelled good. I don't agree."

Khrushchev professes to have found Allied intentions toward the end of the war puzzling. "I wouldn't exclude the possibility that their desire to postpone an assault on Hitler's Western front was dictated by their desire to put a greater burden on the shoulders of the Soviet Union and to bleed us even more. Or perhaps it's as they explained: they weren't sufficiently prepared."

**Correcting an Illusion.** Despite such suspicions, Khrushchev delivers the first public acknowledgment made by any Soviet official of the other Allies' contribution to the final victory. "Unfortunately our historical works about World War II have perpetrated an illusion. They have been written out of a false sense of pride and out of a fear to tell the truth about our Allies' contribution—all because Stalin himself held an incorrect, unrealistic position. He knew the truth, but he admitted it only to himself in the toilet."

Khrushchev particularly remembers vital supplies delivered by Britain and the U.S., including K rations. "There were many jokes in the army, some of them off-color, about American Spam. It tasted good nonetheless." Discussing U.S. wartime leaders, Khrushchev notes that "Stalin always stressed Eisenhower's decency, generosity and chivalry" but "he considered Truman worthless."

Khrushchev learned of the war's end from Zhukov, who told him: "That snake Hitler is dead." Recalls Khrushchev: "I decided to call Stalin to congratulate him. And what was his response? He cut me off rudely and said I was wasting his time. I was simply dumfounded." Khrushchev later decided that Stalin "wanted me to think that he had known all along how the war would turn out. But I knew better. I had watched him during moments of crisis. I knew that during the war Stalin had been even more worried and afraid than the people around him."

### The Story Behind the Story

Few modern publishing events have aroused more intense speculation than the appearance of Former Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's reminiscences in *LIFE*, excerpted from a forthcoming book to be published by Little, Brown entitled *Khrushchev Remembers*. The story behind the story—how the book reached the West—has been the subject of hundreds of newspaper articles. Khrushchev himself denounced the reminiscences, though in curiously muffled style. *LIFE*'s confidence in their authenticity was backed up last week in two stories by the Moscow correspondents of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. The *Post* story quoted "unofficial but exceptionally well-equipped Soviet sources" as saying that the reminiscences "are genuine." The sources also claimed

that Khrushchev was summoned by top authorities to Moscow and compelled to sign his denial.

The spy-story flavoring has included mention in the press of secret hotel meetings, coded Telex messages, smuggled transcripts, hidden political struggles and numbered Swiss-bank accounts. The BBC put together an 18-minute show, complete with maps showing certain points where portions of the manuscript were supposedly delivered from the Soviet Union, and an on-the-scene report from the Copenhagen hotel where the final deal is said to have been made.

Since *LIFE* felt that it could not disclose specific information about its acquisition, the question was how to prove its authenticity. Among other supporting evidence was the conviction of British Sovietologist Edward Crankshaw, who pronounced the manuscript

dale, Ariz.) told Salisbury that Stalin almost always called her "Svetochka," a very intimate variation of her name, rather than the affectionate but less intimate "Svetlanka," as Khrushchev remembers. It is likely, however, that Khrushchev referred to her as he used to address her, "Svetlanka."

**Family Link.** Mrs. Peters also disputed Khrushchev's recollection that Stalin had developed a passion for cowboy movies; she admitted, though, that she saw little of her father during the last few years of his life, the period to which Khrushchev was referring.

The other errors involve mistaken dates of decades ago. Khrushchev remembers dinners hosted by Stalin and his second wife Nadezhda, which he dates at a time when she had already died. Crankshaw and Translator-Editor Strobe Talbott state in the forthcoming

FISCHETTI—CHICAGO DAILY NEWS



"THAT'S WHAT WE GET FOR BEING NICE GUYS AND JUST SWEEPING HIM UNDER THE RUG."

"quite unmistakably" the former Premier's work and agreed to write an introduction. To ensure that the work appeared for what it was—material that Khrushchev had compiled without the benefit of formal research—*LIFE* explained in a publisher's note that the book came "from various sources at various times and in various circumstances." It also insisted that the material be referred to as "reminiscences," implying the informality of its preparation, rather than a "memoir."

Most authorities preferred to wait until publication of the book before making judgments. A few, however, voiced immediate doubts. Harrison E. Salisbury, an associate managing editor of the *New York Times* and a longtime observer of the Soviet Union, complained in a bylined story after the first installment appeared that it was flawed by "basic historic and chronological errors, more, it would seem, than are plausible to attribute to an old man's fading memory."

Salisbury cited six inaccuracies. Stalin's daughter Svetlana (who defected from the Soviet Union in 1967 and is now Mrs. William Peters of West Scotts-

dale, Ariz.) told Salisbury that Stalin almost always called her "Svetochka," a very intimate variation of her name, rather than the affectionate but less intimate "Svetlanka," as Khrushchev remembers. It is likely, however, that Khrushchev referred to her as he used to address her, "Svetlanka."

For all his reservations, Salisbury did not rule out the authenticity of the reminiscences. Indeed, he speculated that "one link" in the book's appearance might be Khrushchev's son-in-law, Aleksei Adzhubei, a former editor of the government newspaper *Izvestia*. The same hunch appeared in a story by the *Times*'s Moscow correspondent, Bernard Gwertzman: "It is not ruled out that some member of his family or a close friend had been taking notes of discussions with him or had tape recordings, and arranged to smuggle them out."

**Possible Boswells.** The Khrushchev family abounds with possible Boswells. Adzhubei's wife Rada, 40, one of Khrushchev's four daughters, has worked as deputy editor of the monthly *Science and Life*. Granddaughter Yulia, whose father Leonid, the elder Khrushchev son, was killed during World War II, studied journalism at Moscow University

and has worked for *Trud*, the trade union newspaper. Her husband Lev, who died in July, was an editor of the news agency Novosti and of the English-language magazine *Soviet Weekly*. With that many journalists in the Khrushchev household, it would not be surprising if the old man's nostalgic story-telling sessions had been recorded.

As for how his words reached the West, one prevalent speculation is that they were brought to Denmark by Victor Louis, a Russian-born journalist (real name: Vitaly Lui) with close ties to the KGB, the Soviet secret police. It was Victor Louis who tried to beat Western publishers into print by offering European firms a version of Svetlana's *Twenty Letters to a Friend*. Either Louis or other KGB men are known to have placed authentic manuscripts in the West, often to try to convict the authors of anti-Soviet propaganda. British Journalist Louis Herren speculated that any KGB involvement might reflect a split between the organization's hard-liners and a more moderate faction that is anxious to counter the neo-Stalinist tendencies of the present leadership with Khrushchev's anti-Stalinist views.\*

Soviet sources told the Washington *Post's* Anthony Astrachan that the authorities allowed release of the reminiscences, which cover a period ending shortly after the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, in the hope of preventing the appearance of a later, more comprehensive version—possibly including the story of his downfall in 1964. The authorities also hoped that errors in the unpolished reminiscences might discredit the document in the West.

According to sources quoted in both the *Post* and the *Times*, Khrushchev was unaware that any version of his reminiscences had reached the West when *LIFE* announced publication. Several days later, the informants said, he received a telephone call from Arvid Pelshe, a Politburo member and chairman of the Party Control Commission, which runs checks on party members. "We have business with you," he said. Though ailing, Khrushchev was picked up at his dacha and driven to the Kremlin, where he was confronted with the news of publication and an already prepared statement of denial. Khrushchev, according to the reports, denied any personal part in the publishing arrangements and signed the statement after making a few changes in wording. A few days later, he was admitted to a hospital for prominent officials, reportedly for treatment of a recurring heart ailment, and he was still there last week.

\* The KGB probably had no involvement in some of the more spectacular phonies foisted on the West. The so-called "memoir" by the late Maxim Litvinov, Stalin's Foreign Commissar, was actually produced by a Soviet defector in Paris, while *The Penkovsky Papers*, purportedly the diaries of a spy in the upper echelon of the Soviet intelligence system who was caught and shot, were allegedly partly concocted by the CIA.

## Unthinkable Journey

Preparations for the solemn, glittering ceremony that was to honor this year's winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature halted abruptly in Stockholm last week. In Moscow, Russian Novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn called at the Swedish embassy to inform Ambassador Gunnar Jarring that he would not be making the journey to Stockholm. Earlier, the writer had expressed his determination to attend the Nobel festivities Dec. 10, "as far as it depends on me." But denunciations of him in the Soviet press have climaxed in the charge that the writer, a twice-decorated war hero, was a Nazi sympathizer.

It seems likely that the Soviet authorities either had denied him a visa for Sweden or had refused to guarantee that he could return home after the ceremony. In spite of the ban on his writings and the abuse poured on him in Russia, friends in Moscow report that Solzhenitsyn considers it "unthinkable" that he could live or work anywhere in the world except in his beloved country.

## MIDDLE EAST

### Shoring Up Sadat

Before a cease-fire halted the fighting in the Middle East in August, Egypt's eastern defenses included squadrons of Soviet-piloted MIG-21s at Kutamiya and Salhiya. The planes were piloted by members of a 150-man Russian force in Egypt. Since the cease-fire, the pilots and their planes at the forward bases have been pulled back to airbases at Cairo West, Inshahs and Alexandria.

The ostensible reason is that Egypt's Russian-designed missile network is now strong enough to guard against any new Israeli incursions into Egyptian airspace. The real reason for the pullback, say some intelligence sources, is that the Kremlin is worried about the viability of the new government of President Anwar Sadat and is taking steps to pro-

tect it—and also to protect Moscow's massive investment in Egypt.

The idea of a coup was remote during the 18-year reign of Gamal Abdel Nasser. But Sadat enjoys vastly less popular support than did Nasser. Therefore Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin, who hurried to Cairo for Nasser's funeral with his Deputy Defense Minister in tow, ordered a number of Russian moves to shore up Sadat. A new Russian military command was established, and Soviet "advisers" serving with the Egyptian army were directed to develop loyal cadres of Egyptians, who would take over—and report to the Russians—in the event that the Egyptian command structure was punctured by a coup.

**Dead Wrong.** In other moves, the Russians pulled back their airplanes and tightened their control of administration, operations and supplies at bases where Soviet troops are stationed. Cairo, Alexandria, Inshahs, Damietta, Aswan and Helwan are all protected by 15 to 20 batteries of SA-3 missiles (with eight missiles to a battery). The batteries are on alert against any low-flying aircraft that might be carrying out ground-support missions for anti-Russian forces—and that could mean not only Israelis but also Egyptians carrying out a pro-Western coup. About 5,000 Russian infantrymen guard the SA-3 missile sites, and they have been briefed on the need to watch against attacks of both kinds. According to some accounts, Sadat now has a group of Soviet bodyguards.

Most Arabists consider a coup against Sadat highly—if not absurd—unlikely. They also question whether the reported Russian military moves took place at all. They may be right in their skepticism. But three months ago some of those same observers also expressed doubt when the first reports appeared that the Soviets and Egyptians were violating the Middle East cease-fire by moving scores of missiles up to the Suez Canal. That time they were dead wrong.

KOSYGIN & SADAT AT NASSER'S FUNERAL

